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BAGHDAD FOR GALBRAITH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EINV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: REO BRINGS BASRAH LEADERS TOGETHER

¶1. Summary and introduction: On February 28 REO Basrah's director hosted a farewell luncheon for the outgoing UK Consul General, Ros Marsden, with local prominent officials in attendance. The luncheon was also intended to kick-start a dialogue between Basrah's Governor; Basrah Provincial Council (BPC) members; and tribal, business, and religious leaders as Basrah moves ever closer to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC). The discussion focused on finding a local solution to the violence which plagues the city. Although the guests were all in agreement that the only way to get Basrah back on its feet was to increase security and address unemployment, they disagreed on the best mechanism to achieve this goal. Nevertheless, momentum for such discussion has now been established and the participants agreed to continue to work towards viable solutions. The press was invited in at the conclusion of the event to interview the participants. The REO is hopeful that the exchange will not only improve the PIC process but encourage local Iraqis to take greater control of their futures. End summary.

¶2. The luncheon was attended by Basrah Governor Mohammed Al Wa'eli, BPC Deputy Chairwoman Ezra Al-Saad, former BPC member and leader of the Al-Kanaan tribe Sheikh Mansour Al-Kanaan, moderate Shia imam Saeed Ali Al-Musawi, moderate Sunni cleric Sheikh Khalid Al-Mulla, and Chairman of the Basrah Business Center Abdul Hafidh Al-Aty. All share the vision of Basrah as another Dubai, but agreed this is not possible until violence abates, international investment increases, and unemployment numbers come down. The deputy director opined that Basrah had to stop looking to Dubai as the example and to instead make Basrah the example to follow; an idea that seemed to resonate with the crowd. Disagreement arose when the Governor stated that with greater powers, he could clean up the corrupt police, who he considered to be the root of the problem. Sheikh Mansour countered that "we need to avoid listening to just one person" when it came to creating a solution for securing Basrah. Blaming the Coalition for Basrah's woes by mishandling the creation of the security forces, Sheikh Mansour insisted that since the Coalition created the problem, it needed to fix it.

¶3. The group also focused on the "lack" of reconstruction projects. (Note. Over a billion dollars has been spent or obligated for Basrah province but local perception is that the Coalition has done nothing to improve their city. End note.) Tying international investment and technical support for projects to a reduced unemployment figure, Al-Aty advised that the local Basrahwis could not "do it alone." There was consensus that the UK troop reductions would help alleviate some security concerns, but the participants also called for U.S. and UK FDI to help Basrah rebuild its economy. Comment: With increased dialogue and press attention on the topic, the discussion may finally move to the point of solution. End comment.

